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ABSTRACT

Since 1971 the South Carolina Department of Education has collected data on school dropouts. However, the system did not reconcile the number of students who drop out repeatedly, leave for the summer, re-enroll in the following school year, or move to other educational programs. The new data collection system accumulates more accurate data and distinguishes between true dropouts and legitimate "school leavers." A dropout is a student who leaves prior to graduation without transferring to another institution. Dropouts are distinguished by not re-enrolling for the current year, having moved and not being enrolled in school, transferring to an institution that does not provide an alternative educational program, being suspended or expelled with an option to return and not doing so, and being expelled with no option to return. Verification of student status can be made through formal notice, documentation, or a responsible adult. Every school reports the name, Social Security or identification number, race, sex, and date of birth of each dropout and forwards the information to the superintendent who issues a district report. A school dropout report form, a school dropout listing form, and a district summary report form are attached. (EJS)

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POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE COLLECTION OF SCHOOL DROPOUT DATA

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EA 022 810

Dropout Prevention and Retrieval Section
Office of Leadership and School Improvement
South Carolina Department of Education

Charlie G. Williams, State Superintendent

April 1990

I. BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

A. History

Since 1971, the South Carolina Department of Education has collected data on school dropouts. The data have been collected at the end of each 180-day school year in grades one through twelve. The data were analyzed and reported according to the number and percentage of dropouts in grades one through eight, one through twelve, nine, ten, eleven, and twelve. The data also were disaggregated by sex and race.

B. The Problem

South Carolina's old dropout data collection system provided some meaningful data about the ability of a school or district program to hold students for a given school year. The system did not reconcile, however, the numbers of students who drop out repeatedly, who leave school during the summer, or who re-enroll after dropping out the prior school year. The system also failed to account for many students who moved to other educational programs leading to a high school diploma or alternative equivalent certification.

Uniform, comparable dropout data is a critical and missing component in the national database of educational performance indicators. This situation has caused the United States Department of Education to use "holding power" in its annual "wall chart" comparisons. Data collected in 1986 by the Bureau of the Census suggest that holding power is <u>not</u> a valid measure for determining dropout rates.

C. Purpose of Revised System

The purpose of the new data collection system is to collect more accurate data on South Carolina school dropouts. This will be accomplished through the use of policies and procedures designed to distinguish between true dropouts and legitimate "school leavers." These policies and procedures parallel those used in an ongoing national field test sponsored by the National Center for Educational Statistics.

Hopefully, this new system will lead to a common national standard and more equitable comparisons of this important performance area.

II. DEFINITIONS

A. State Board of Education Definition of Dropout

1. A dropout is a student who leaves school for any reason, other than death, prior to graduation or completion of a course of studies and without transferring to another school or institution.

2. Although Section III contains a listing of the various categories of "school leavers," the following criteria clarify and expand the above definition by designating a dropout as an individual who:

   a. was enrolled in school during the previous school year, but did not re-enroll at the beginning of the current school year;

   b. was enrolled in school during the previous school year and dropped out, re-enrolled at the beginning of the current school year, but left prior to the 45th day of school;

   c. has not completed a state or district-approved educational program that provides an alternative certification to a high school diploma;

   d. has not transferred to a state or district-approved educational program that provides an alternative certification to a high school diploma;

   e. is not temporarily absent due to suspension, long-term illness, or other emergency.

B. Definition of School Year

For the purposes of tabulating school dropouts, a school year is defined as a twelve month period of time beginning with the first day of school in the fall. Please note, however, that students who re-enroll in school after dropping out during the prior school year, and who leave prior to the 45th day of the current school year, would be counted in the twelve month collection cycle.

C. Definition of Grade

1. Dropout data should be reported for grades 6-12. The reported grade level of prior year or summer dropouts will be their grade level of the previous school year. For example, a student who leaves after the completion or failure of grade 9 would be reported as a 9th grade dropout.

2. Ungraded students should be assigned a nominal grade level. To determine nominal grade level, take the age of the student as of the 45th day of the current school year minus the number 5. As an example, a 15 year old's nominal grade level is grade 10. All ungraded students over the age of 17 should be reported as being in the 12th grade.

3. Twelfth grade dropouts would be computed by totaling the number of students who:

a. have not graduated during the regular or summer school terms, and

b. have not completed a state or district-approved educational program that provides an alternative certification to the high school diploma (e.g., GED or state certificate), and

c. have not re-enrolled for the current school year.

D. Definition of Race

1.	White (not of Hispanic origin)	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East.
2.	Black (not of Hispanic origin)	A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.
3.	Hispanic	A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.
4.	Asian/American	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, or Indian subcontinent. This area includes China, India, Japan, Korea, the Philippine Islands, and Samoa.
5.	American Indian	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition. Includes Alaskan natives.

III. CATEGORIES OF "SCHOOL LEAVERS"

A. It is essential to distinguish between actual dropouts and students who leave for legitimate reasons. The following chart provides a summary of "school leaver" statuses that would or would not be designated as a dropout.

STUDENT STATUS		IS A DROPOUT?
1.	Graduated	NO
2.	Completed a state or district-approved educational program that provides an alternative certification to a high school diploma. Examples include GED, state high school certificate, or special education completers as follows:	NO
	a. regular handicapped students who have completed the requirements of an IEP;	
	b. profoundly handicapped students who reach the age of 21 without completing the requirements of an IEP;	
	c. profoundly handicapped students who enter a residential or day care facility.	
3.	Was in membership only during the summer term following the prior school year (i.e., was not in membership during the prior, regular school year)	NO
4.	Passed the age of twenty-one or has been emancipated by the courts	NO
5.	Deceased	NO
6.	Has not re-enrolled for the current school year, and educational status is unknown the 45th day of school	YES
7.	Moved out of district, state, or country and is not enrolled in school	YES
8.	Transferred to and membership in:	
	a. Another public school, in- or out-of-state	NO
	b. A private school, in-or out-of-state	NO
9.	Transferred to an institution that does not provide an educational program leading to a high school diploma or alternative certification (e.g., military service, proprietary or trade schools, hospitals, rehabilitative facilities, or adult correctional facilities - EXCEPTION: Palmetto Unified School District)	YES

STUDENT STATUS			IS A DROPOUT?
10.	Residing in district and not in school:		
	a.	Absent because of temporary or long-term illness	NO
	b.	Absent because of disciplinary action:	
		(1) Suspended or expelled and has the option to return and the disciplinary period is still in effect	NO
		(2) Suspended or expelled and has the option to return; the disciplinary period has expired,and student has not returned	YES
		(3) Suspended or expelled and transferred to another district	NO
		(4) Expelled with no option to return	YES
11.	Transferred to an institution that does provide a state or district-approved educational program leading to a high school diploma or alternative certification (e.g., youth correctional institutions, technical colleges, special state schools or districts, homebound instruction, home schooling)		NO
12.	Enrolled in a full-time higher education program without having a high school diploma		NO
13.	Has not re-enrolled but is expected to return late because of extenuating circumstances (e.g., seasonal or migratory work)		NO

B. Updating Records

The status of the "leaver" may change over time. For example, a dropout might re-enter during the school year, or a school might receive a transcript request from another school or institution. It is important to update records as soon as student statuses change.

C. Collection Cycle

School and district dropout data will be collected after the 45th day of school.

IV. PROCEDURES FOR VERIFYING STUDENT STATUS

A. Verification Through Formal Notice

1. A request for a transcript or written/oral documentation from the receiving school will verify that a student has transferred. Date of receipt of the request should be maintained, along with the address of the school to which the student has transferred.

2. It is not necessary to verify student attendance at the receiving school following receipt of a transfer request.

3. A student is a transfer only if moving to a public or private school, or state or district-approved educational program leading to a high school diploma or alternative certification.

4. Procedures such as exit interviews would constitute verification.

B. Verification by Responsible Adult

1. Any notification from a responsible adult will verify a student's status. Responsible adults include parents or guardians, school officials, or any other adult with responsibility for the student (e.g., attendance supervisor, social worker, medical doctor, corrections official, etc.)

2. If an inappropriate adult or student reports that a student has dropped out of school, this should not constitute verification.

C. Documentation

1. It is important that each school document the verification of student status. Since a student who drops out during a particular school year is not reported as a dropout until the fall of the following school year, records must be maintained to produce an accurate count.

2. It is best to have verification in writing. This may include a copy of the transcript request, a letter from the parent or guardian, or other notes which document information about the status of the student.

V. REPORTING DROPOUT DATA

A. School Dropout Report and School Dropout Listing

1. Every school should report on the form titled **School Dropout Report** (SDE 25-020-00). This form is shown as Exhibit 1. Schools should report total dropouts by sex and race in grades 6 through 12. If a school has no dropouts, this should be indicated by entering the word "None" in block 11.

Dropout data should be reported according to the following format:

a. **Grade** - The count for each grade will be noted separately. Ungraded students will be assigned a nominal grade level (see Definition of Grade)

b. **Sex** - Within each of the seven grade categories, a separate count will be made for males and females.

c. **Race** - Within each of the grade/sex categories, the dropout count will provide information on five racial categories:

(1) Black, not of Hispanic origin

(2) White, not of Hispanic origin

(3) Hispanic

(4) Asian/American including Pacific Islanders

(5) American Indian including Alaskan natives

2. Accompanying the **School Dropout Report** is the **School Dropout Listing** (SDE 25-019-01) shown as Exhibit 2. This form should list the name, social security or OSIRIS identification number, race, sex and date of birth of each student counted in the **School Dropout Report**. The name should be the legal name recorded on the birth certificate and the permanent school record. **In cases where a social security number is not available, the student's OSIRIS identification number should be reported.** The number of names on the **School Dropout Listing** should equal the number of students reported on the **School Dropout Report**.

3. After the **School Dropout Report and Listing** have been completed and signed by the school principal, they should be forwarded to the district superintendent.

B. District Dropout Summary

1. Upon receipt of the **School Dropout Reports** and **School Dropout Listing**, the superintendent completes the **District Dropout Summary** (SDE 25-021-00). This form is shown as Exhibit 3.

2. The **District Dropout Summary** contains a compilation of the data found on the School Dropout Reports. This summary along with the **School Dropout Reports** and **School Dropout Listing** should be forwarded **no later than the Friday before Thanksgiving,** to the following address:

South Carolina Department of Education
Dropout Prevention and Retrieval Section
1429 Senate Street - Room 1206
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Followup Assistance

- Questions about the dropout data collection policies and procedures or requests for assistance should be directed to the Dropout Prevention and Retrieval Section at 734-8458.

- Suggestions for changes in the dropout data policies or procedures should be forwarded, in writing, to Dr. John Tudor, Chief Supervisor.

SCHOOL DROPOUT REPORT

BEDS Code

County ☐☐ District ☐☐ School ☐☐☐

NOTE: This report and its accompanying School Dropout Listing (SDE 25-019-01) must be forwarded to the district superintendent for submission to the State Department of Education.

COUNTY	DISTRICT	SCHOOL

LINE NO.	RACE AND SEX OF DROPOUTS	NUMBER OF DROPOUTS BY GRADE							TOTAL
		6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
01	MALE - BLACK, not of Hispanic origin								
02	MALE - WHITE, not of Hispanic origin								
03	MALE - HISPANIC								
04	MALE - ASIAN/AMERICAN								
05	MALE - AMERICAN INDIAN								
06	FEMALE - BLACK, not of Hispanic origin								
07	FEMALE - WHITE, not of Hispanic origin								
08	FEMALE - HISPANIC								
09	FEMALE - ASIAN/AMERICAN								
10	FEMALE - AMERICAN INDIAN								
11	TOTAL								

I certify that this report is true and correct.

_____ Principal

_____ Date

SDE 25-020-00 (This form becomes obsolete 6-30-94)

Please refer to back of page for detailed definitions of "dropout" and "race."

EXHIBIT 1

School Dropout Listing

To Accompany School
Dropout Report (SDE 25-020-00)

BEDS Code		
County	District	School
☐☐	☐☐	☐☐☐

COUNTY	DISTRICT	SCHOOL

Instructions: In the spaces below, number and list the name, Social Security or OSIRIS number, race, sex, and date of birth of each student reported to the State Department of Education on the School Dropout Report. The number of names should equal the number of students reported. Attach this sheet, and other sheets as necessary, to the School Dropout Report and forward all reports to the district superintendent. This page may be duplicated as necessary. A computer generated form in this same format containing the appropriate signatures may be substituted.

NO.	Name	SSN or OSIRIS Number	Race	Sex	DOB

Principal _____ **Date** _____

Person Completing This Form _____ **Title** _____

SDE - 25-019-01 (This form becomes obsolete 6/30/93).

EXHIBIT 2

DISTRICT DROPOUT SUMMARY

BEDS Code

County ☐☐ District ☐☐

INSTRUCTIONS: *Summarize the information from each "School Dropout Report" and record the totals on this form.*

Please return this form to:

At-Risk Youth Section
Room 1206 Rutledge Building
1429 Senate Street
Columbia, SC 29201

COUNTY	DISTRICT

LINE NO.	RACE AND SEX OF DROPOUTS	NUMBER OF DROPOUTS BY GRADE							DISTRICT TOTAL
		6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
01	MALE - BLACK, not of Hispanic origin								
02	MALE - WHITE, not of Hispanic origin								
03	MALE - HISPANIC								
04	MALE - ASIAN/AMERICAN								
05	MALE - AMERICAN INDIAN								
06	FEMALE - BLACK, not of Hispanic origin								
07	FEMALE - WHITE, not of Hispanic origin								
08	FEMALE - HISPANIC								
09	FEMALE - ASIAN/AMERICAN								
10	FEMALE - AMERICAN INDIAN								
11	TOTAL								

I certify that this report is true and correct.

_____ _____

District Superintendent Date

SDE 25-021-00 (This form becomes obsolete 6-30-95)

Please refer to back of page for detailed definitions of "dropout" and "race."

EXHIBIT 3

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